

B vitamins SLOW Alzheimer's

For elderly people with mild memory problems, very large doses of B vitamins can halve the rate of brain shrinkage and slow the progression to dementia and eventually Alzheimer's, say excited Oxford University investigators.

Their two-year study involved 168 volunteers with early-stage memory loss who were given either a daily pill containing huge doses of folic acid, vitamin B6 and vitamin B12, or a placebo (inactive substance).

Individuals who took the vitamin pills suffered far less brain shrinkage!

"This is a very dramatic and striking result," says Dr. David Smith. "It is our hope that this simple and safe treatment will delay development of Alzheimer's in many people who suffer from mild memory problems."

In addition to saying more research is needed, he warned that people should not start taking the vitamins without first talking to their doctor.

★ Athletes take note: Distance runners who stretch before running may not be able to run as far, even though they will burn more energy trying.

A Florida State University study involved college-age male runners who performed a 60-minute treadmill run twice — once after 16 minutes of stretching and once without.

Surprisingly, when the runners stretched, their average distance was 3.4 percent less than without stretching, and — though they covered less distance — they burned 5 percent more calories to do it.



Hot news on hot flashes

★ A medication that treats depression dramatically lowers the frequency of postmenopausal hot flashes without increased side effects.

Low doses of the antidepressant citalopram (Celexa) cut hot-flash frequency and severity by more than 50 percent, according to a new study presented by the Mayo Clinic.

While some other antidepressants also reduce hot flashes, the Mayo team says citalopram has the advantage of producing very few side effects.

In addition, this user-friendly drug is taken just once a day and is available generically at a low cost.

Exercise warm-up SHOCKER



Vitamin D gets an 'A' for fighting asthma

★ Adding vitamin D supplements to standard asthma treatments may lead to improved asthma control.

Creighton University researchers reviewed almost 60 years of information on vitamin D and asthma,



and discovered a positive connection.

"Vitamin D can complement your prescribed asthma treatment plan, as it has been shown to have some anti-inflammatory properties," says Dr. Thomas Casale. "But it should never be used as an alternative to prescribed medication."

For an easy online test to gauge your asthma symptoms and to obtain a personalized relief plan, visit www.allergyandasthma relief.org.

Alternative BIRTH SETTING



★ Alternative birthing rooms are as safe as traditional hospital maternity floors, and women who utilize them require fewer drugs, according to University of Toronto experts.

A review of nine prior studies found that alternative birthing rooms cut use of anesthesia

by 18 percent, the need for labor-inducing drugs by 22 percent, and C-sections by 11 percent.

"If you change the physical environment such that it supports normal labor and birth, good things can happen," says Dr. Ellen Hodnett.